

**New Jersey Department of Education  
Special Education Monitoring**

**District:** Point Pleasant Borough School District

**County:** Ocean

**Monitoring Dates:** April 1, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Michelle Davis, Deborah Masarsky, Kimberly Murray  
and Stephen Coplin

***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Point Pleasant Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Point Pleasant Borough School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
- The protection of procedural safeguards for students and their families;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and,
- The organization and delivery of programs and services resulting in positive student outcomes.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Point Pleasant Borough School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Point Pleasant Borough School District on March 20, 2003. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

**District Strengths:**

**Project Soar** – The district provides all students with the opportunity to participate in a program that provides individual student assistance in reading, writing and math as part of the district's Extended School Day Program.

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**Community Based Work Skill Development Program** – This program allows students to receive course credits upon the completion of a school-to-work program. The employer provides the district with evaluations documenting student performance on a quarterly basis.

**Preschool Tournament of Champions** – This program affords preschool students with the opportunity to participate in various track and field events. Additionally, the district's high school students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers are asked to participate in planning the event and facilitating the activities.

**Challenger League** – Students between the ages of 6 and 13 have the option to participate in this community based basketball/baseball program. This program promotes socialization activities for students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers away from the classroom environment.

**PTO Bowling** – Elementary school students with disabilities can participate with their nondisabled peers in an intramural weekly bowling league sponsored by the district's Parent/Teacher Organization. This noncompetitive league offers these students with the opportunity to socially interact with their nondisabled peers outside the classroom setting.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

**General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment** and **Statewide Assessment** were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

### ***Section III: Procedural Safeguards***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of selection and training of surrogate parents, provision/content of notices for students eligible for special education and related services, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of consent for students eligible for speech/language services, notice of a meeting for students eligible for speech/language services, meeting participants for students eligible for speech/language services, written notice for students eligible for speech/language services and the 15/20 day timelines for students eligible for speech/language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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### **Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find procedures, direct referrals from parents and staff and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral interventions, referral process for students eligible for speech/language services when other disabilities are suspected, health appraisals and vision/hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision/components of written reports and functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of multi-disciplinary evaluations. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of reports. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section VI: Reevaluation**

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings and reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of students last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of reevaluation timelines and meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of eligibility meetings/participants for students eligible for speech/language services, provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting for students eligible for speech/language services and eligibility criteria for students eligible for speech/language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability and documentation of agreement/disagreement with eligibility.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Statement of Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and record review that the district does not document the specific area(s) of severe discrepancy between the student's current achievement and intellectual ability and does not state that the student's disability is not primarily a result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district will revise its eligibility statement for specific learning disability to include the statements required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)11.**

**Documentation of Agreement/Disagreement with Eligibility** - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and record review indicated that eligibility meeting participants do not document their agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure eligibility meeting participants document their agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings, statements of present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, IEP

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implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of participation of vocational school staff at meetings. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of considerations and required statements in IEPs. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and in-service training to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation, statement of transition service needs, statement of needed transition services and agency involvement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section X: Transition to Preschool**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention to preschool program by age three.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section XI: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments/behavior intervention plans and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments/behavior intervention plans and interim alternative educational setting. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and in-service training to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### ***Section XIII: Graduation***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of written notice of graduation and participation of out-of-district students in graduation activities.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of graduation requirements and written notice of graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the rationale for exemption from passing the HSPA.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Rationale for Exemption from Passing the HSPA** – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that when a student is exempt from passing the HSPA, the district documents the alternate requirement but fails to include the rationale for this exemption.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents in the IEP the rationale for exemption from passing the HSPA. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### ***Section XIV: Programs and Services***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class sizes waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of consultation time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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**Section XV: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the documentation of other location(s) of student records.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Documentation of Other Locations of Student Records** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document the location of other student record(s) in the central file.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the central file documents the location of other student record(s) maintained by the district.**

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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Point Pleasant Borough School District on April 1, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Some parents stated concerns regarding the district's willingness to explore new programs and practices for the more severely disabled students.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the selection and training of surrogate parents, provision/content of notices for students eligible for special education and related services, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find procedures, direct referrals from parents and staff, identification meetings, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, planning meetings, reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of students last year in preschool, provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting for students eligible for special education and related services, IEP meetings, statements of present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, IEP implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, preschool transition planning conferences, early intervention to preschool program by age three, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments/behavior intervention plans, procedural safeguards, written notice of graduation, participation of out-of-district students in graduation activities, class sizes/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, parent access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding consent for students eligible for speech/language services, notice of a meeting for students eligible for speech/language services, meeting participants for students eligible for speech/language services, written notice for students eligible for speech/language services, the 15/20 day timelines for students eligible for speech/language services, pre-referral interventions, referral process for students eligible for speech/language services when other disabilities are suspected, health appraisals, vision/hearing screenings, provision/components of written reports, functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations, reevaluation timelines, meeting participants, eligibility meetings/participants for students eligible for speech/language services, provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting for students eligible for speech/language services, eligibility criteria for students eligible for speech/language services, participation of vocational school staff at meetings, considerations and required statements in IEPs, student/agency invitation, statement of transition service needs, statement of needed transition services, agency involvement, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments/behavior intervention plans,



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interim alternative educational setting, graduation requirements, written notice of graduation and consultation time.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability, documentation of agreement/disagreement with eligibility, rationale for exemption from passing the HSPA and documentation of other location(s) of student records,

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Point Pleasant Borough School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.